



HANDOUT - B

ACTIVITY - CASE STUDY

Urban Solutions is a well-established community based organization that in 2003 served 94 older youth in its six-week WIA funded hospitality training program. Included among Urban Solutions' local partners are the State University and The Newport House—a full-service transitional housing facility that offers counseling and vocational training. Urban Solutions has five team members: the program director, an administrative assistant, one job trainer, one job developer and one graduate services counselor. Because of staff turnover, the job developer and the graduate services counselor arrived in the last six months.

THE YOUTH CUSTOMER

When Karen, a 19 year-old single mother, came to Urban Solutions, she was living in a Homeless Shelter. She had been living at her mother's house, but had been told she had to leave. Her mother disapproved of how she dealt with her two year-old son and was upset about Karen constantly bringing her boyfriend home. The little boy remained with his grandmother. When asked why she was interested in Urban Solutions, Karen said the only way she could keep her bed at the shelter was to find a job or immediately begin a program leading to employment.

Rose, Urban Solutions' job trainer, and Marvin, the job developer, worked very closely with Karen, helping her to improve her communication skills and reflect on her life choices and goals. Rose helped Karen get into transitional housing offered by The Newport House. Karen completed a six-week training program, and when employers came in to do mock interviews, they were impressed, rating Karen's interview skills as "very good." Karen was also enrolled in a Saturday GED class, offered by the State University's Weekend School, and the instructor said she was doing extremely well, needing just a little extra help with math. She would probably be able to pass the GED in three months if she continued to come on Saturdays.

Karen had very little work history. She had only one job at a car wash for six months. At the beginning of the program, she had said that her supervisor was difficult and demanding and the pay was low. "It wasn't worth it," she'd explained. In later discussions with staff, Karen said she understood that for a while she would have to earn just above minimum wage, and that she was committed to staying somewhere long enough to get a good reference and have the chance to move up. Marvin opened up doors for Karen by securing her a position in the café of the Biltmore Hotel in Providence; the pay was \$7.50 per hour. Several other Urban



Solutions graduates worked there, and Marvin saw the hotel chain's high turnover rate as something that could be the basis of a strong partnership.

THE ISSUE AT HAND

When Karen began work at the hotel she was exited from the WIA program. For the first 30 days, she did well. The 30 day follow-up report, collected by Aaron the graduate services counselor, noted that Karen received a 25 cent raise. Eight weeks after placement, Aaron received a phone call from Karen's manager. Apparently, Karen had developed what the manager called "a nasty attitude." She was often late for work and seemed unapologetic. He called Karen immediately, but only managed to speak with her house manager; he found out that she was losing her place at Newport House for violation of the visitors' rules. When Aaron finally reached Karen, she was dismissive and said she would only be able to come in the following week after work.

QUESTIONS

1. Is there anything that Urban Solutions might have done to prevent this situation?
2. What program service implications does this suggest for Urban Solutions? Are there more services that could be provided? How could follow-up/retention services be improved?



Performance Enhancement Project

Designing a Follow-up/Retention System to Enhance Youth Customer and WIA Performance

3. What did Urban Solutions do to positively contribute to a culture of retention/follow-up?